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SPEECHES

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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

Jean Jules Jusserand

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For Mr. Allen H. Wright's  
collection  
with best regards  
Jusserand

New York, May 22, 1923.

UNVEILING OF LINCOLN'S BUST AT THE HALL

OF FAME

.....

ADDRESS OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR

A true born American, representing the seventh generation from the original settler arrived in 1637, his family having since moved around the country, building homes in six different states, the great man of world-wide fame whose bust we are dedicating today, came of humble stock and grew up among the humblest surroundings. No family tuition was to help him; scarcely any schooling scarcely any book were within the reach of one to whom the fates would give for his task to perfect the work of Washington and make it indestructible.

Reaching boyhood and manhood in Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, deprived of the usual assistances - "I, a friendless, uneducated, penniless boy, working on a flatboat at ten dollars per month" - was fitted for a career unique in the history of the world, by the forest, the swamp, the river, by necessity, by the great heart God had given him, in which courage, tenderness, humor,





humor, an aptitude to merriment, an aptitude to melancholy, lived together, all kept within bounds by common sense.

These moulded a man who, fearless by nature and habit, surrounded from childhood by the unknown and the unexpected, would be in after life astonished at nothing, and who, in his soul's solitude, with no one to rely upon, would in the every day difficulties of his rough beginnings, gather information by personal experience, silently think the matter over for himself and take his own decision. Such he was at Pigeon Creek, so was he at the council table during the terrible war.

Concerning the union his sentiment never changed; his opinion was like Washington's who had written: "When the bond of union gets once broken everything ruinous to our future prospects is to be apprehended". Concerning slavery, a friend of liberty though he was, it took him a long time to become an abolitionist; he would have preferred gradual abolition with compensation to the slave owners: in which again his ideas were very similar to those of Washington.

When however he found that there was no means of preserving the union save to solve at all risks the old standing problem once for all, his decision became immovable; that heart of his, full of tenderness, became adamant: "This world, he wrote, is a world of compensation and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave".

He trusted the American people to resume the struggle if he failed; to continue, if he died, the unfinished task:

"If





"If my own strength should fail, I shall at least fall back upon these masses who I think, under any circumstances will not fail".

His transparent honesty, forceful character and earnestness, natural eloquence, mastery of the English language, so great that, when he is at his best, one cannot add, suppress, change or displace a word without spoiling his sentence, his shrewd intelligence of matters political, had raised him from the obscurity where he lay concealed, to be, first, post master at now vanished New Salem, then member of the House of Representatives of Illinois, afterwards member of Congress; then, on the eve of the most perilous conflict this republic and modern democracy had ever had to face, Sixteenth President of the United States.

What the conflict was, between opponents equally brave, equally sure of their rights, all the world knows. Its vicissitudes were followed for four years with heartbeats abroad as well as at home by all the believers in Republican institutions. The future of democracy depended in a large measure upon the issue. Could a republic stand such a test, survive, form again a union? It did, owing chiefly to that great heart God had given Lincoln, to the chivalrous character of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, both side by side justly honored in these halls, and owing also to the equal patriotism of the winners and the losers in the conflict.

Fair to all, just to all, mourning so many losses,  
in





in battles where every fighter was an American, preserving a sentiment for "the good men of the South, and I regard the majority of them as such", the great citizen who had entered the war having hoped to the last that it could be avoided, - "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies" - saw the end of the storm, could once more repeat "We are not enemies but friends", and, his task fulfilled, fell the last victim of the cause to which he had dedicated his life.

All nations were stirred with horror; a hero, a martyr, had disappeared from a world the better for his words, his deeds, his example. Regrets and praise were universal; the best praise is perhaps in the very simple words engraved on the gold medal struck by the French nation for Mrs. Lincoln (and in order to show that it was truly national, no one had been allowed to subscribe more than two cents): "Lincoln, honest man, who abolished slavery, reestablished the Union, saved the Republic, without veiling the Statue of Liberty".

Strengthened and united, understanding better from his example, as the Great War showed in our days, the value of disinterested courage and generosity, his nation was now ready for a more brilliant destiny than it had ever known before.

From all parts of the United States, from many parts of the world, pilgrims will come in future times to this shrine. Standing before the bust of Lincoln, they will commune with him, recall his greatness and his services, and  
leave



leave these precincts with Lowell's beautiful line on  
their lips:

"And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to  
face" ./.





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